

half-running
but couldn't get up
to tap the handle
and end that
sound

my god damned pipes were
clogged.

COFFEE (1985)

I was having a coffee at the
counter
when a man
3 or 4 stools down
asked me,
"listen, weren't you the
guy who was
hanging from his
heels
from that 4th floor
hotel room
the other
night?"

"yes," I answered, "that
was me."

"what made you do
that?" he asked.

"well, it's pretty
involved."

he looked forward
then.

the waitress
who had been
standing there
asked me,
"he was joking,
wasn't
he?"

"no," I
said.

I paid, got up, walked
to the door, opened
it.

I heard the man
say, "that guy's
nuts."

out on the street I
walked north
feeling
curiously
honored.

THE WAY IT WORKS? (1988)

sometimes I think the gods
deliberately keep pushing
me into fires
just to hear me
yelp out
a few good
lines.

they just aren't going to
let me retire
silk scarf about neck
giving lectures at
Yale.

the gods need me to
entertain them.

they must be terribly
bored with
the others

but I am too.

and now my cigarette lighter
has gone out.
I sit here
flicking it:
click, click, click....

this kind of fire
they won't
give me.

— Charles Bukowski
San Pedro CA